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CAMP-MEETINGS AND THE SABBATH.

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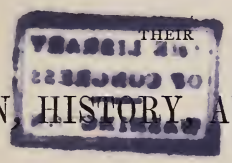


THEIR ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND UTILITY.

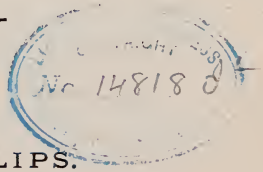
ALSO,

Their Perversion, and How to Correct It.

EMBRACING A CAREFUL REVIEW OF THE SABBATH QUESTION.

BY S. C. SWALLOW,

OF THE CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE, M. E. CHURCH.



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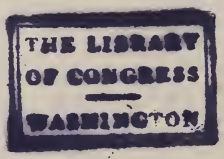

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S. C. SWALLOW,
Tyrone, Pa.

PREFACE.

THESE pages, hastily written, amid the press of other work, were prompted by the request of brethren esteemed in the ministry and laity, as, also, by a sincere desire to promote the interests of our beloved Church. By thus calling attention to the origin, history, and utility of Camp-meetings, the author hopes to aid in correcting some abuses, and to assist in placing this distinctive institution of our Church under such conditions as shall render it, in a prudential sense, like the Gospel it proclaims, "the power of God unto salvation."

He gratefully acknowledges the help afforded him by the standard histories of the Church, and the aid of the large number of brethren connected with, or stationed near, our principal encampments. The latter was secured in answer to a circular letter, embracing, among many others, the following questions: "Is the real estate of your camp-meeting association deeded in trust to the Methodist Episcopal Church? How many of your trustees are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church? How many tents or cottages are there on the ground? What percentage of regular attendants are members of the Methodist Episco-

pal Church? Do special trains run to the encampment on the Sabbath day, or do regular trains stop at the grounds? Are the gates of your camp closed over Sabbath? How many are annually converted? (Average.) What has the meeting done for Methodism in the patronizing territory? In your judgment, have camp-meetings, as conducted by the Methodist Episcopal Church for the last ten years, and by smaller denominations that pattern after us, been a means of advancing the moral and spiritual interests of the patronizing territory?" etc., etc.

We have endeavored to make these pages the brief embodiment of the logical inferences drawn from the premises thus kindly furnished. We may not pencil a pleasing outline for those whose "love of what is ours" is so ardent as to reject unpalatable truths concerning the Church of their choice, but have ventured the presumption that we are sufficiently removed from our Church centennial inflation epoch to be willing "to see ourselves as others see us," and "to be painted as we *are*," if a sight of the picture will but aid us in improving the original. If we adhere to the ethic, rather than the apologetic, side of our subject, it is because the latter is already overdone, and will find a new field for conquest in the pages that follow.

TYRONE, *Sept.* 18, 1878.

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CAMP-MEETINGS.

CHAPTER I.

CAMP-MEETINGS: THEIR ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND UTILITY.

IN the year 1799 two brothers, preachers, John and William M'Gee, the former a Methodist, and the latter a Presbyterian, both serving congregations in West Tennessee, set off on a tour through what was called "The Barrens," toward the State of Ohio. On their way they stopped at a settlement on Red River to attend a sacramental service in the congregation under the pastoral charge of the Rev. Mr. M'Gready, a Presbyterian minister. John M'Gee (the Methodist) was invited to preach, which he did with much power. This sermon was followed by others, preached by William M'Gee and another Presbyterian minister, named Hoge, which produced "such a powerful effect that tears in abundance attested that the people felt the force of the truths delivered." The public excitement became intense. The meetings were continued, and people in great numbers came great distances to witness and attend them. The house being

too small, a grove was selected, a stand built, and the people, provided with food for a siege, lived for several days in their wagons, in rude tents of cloth hastily improvised, and in huts made of the boughs of the forest trees.

The Methodist M'Gee preached the first camp-meeting sermon. His brother minister, Presbyterian, attempted to preach the second, but could not, so wonderfully was he affected by the Spirit's power. Forgetting his preparation, he adopted the Pauline method of telling his experience, and closed with a rousing exhortation, under which sinners fell as dead men, and cries and groans were heard on every hand. The slain of the Lord were many, and shouts of victory quickly succeeded groans of remorse.

Similar meetings, in which Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists joined, were soon held, attracting people hundreds of miles. It is believed that from twenty to thirty thousand persons attended some of those earlier meetings, and that, too, in a country but sparsely settled.

The first flush of excitement over, the Presbyterian friends remembered their dispassionate antecedents, and published their disfavor of such unwarrantable irregularities. These meetings, however, had created a demand among them for more preachers than their

schools, combined with immigration, could furnish; hence deeply pious but uneducated laymen, professing to be called by the Spirit, were appointed to preach by the Presbytery of Transylvania, but, their reception being strenuously opposed by some of the clergy, they were refused ordination. The Cumberland Presbytery, however, having more liberal views, not only granted them ordination, but received on trial others similarly disqualified; for which it was censured by the Synod of Kentucky. This censure being appealed from, was confirmed by the General Assembly, which caused the Cumberlands to withdraw from its jurisdiction, and in the year 1810 to organize the Cumberland Presbyterian Church; a body now numbering nearly one hundred and fifty thousand communicants. It holds middle ground in doctrine between Calvinism and Arminianism, and has an itinerant ministry.

The Methodists, with little temporal prestige, churches few, small, and scattered, a new people on new soil, followed the leadings of Providence in favoring camp-meetings, and held them with marked success throughout the country.

In 1807 Lorenzo Dow, in the course of his wanderings, visited England, and there introduced the American camp-meetings. The Wesleyan Conference of the same year de-

clared that, "however allowable such meetings might be in America, they were highly improper in England, and likely to be productive of considerable mischief, and we disclaim all connection with them." A controversy ensued among the members of this body, that terminated in the expulsion from the society of about two hundred members. Among the number were William Clows, a local preacher, and Hugh Bourne, an influential layman and a church trustee, both zealous advocates of camp-meetings.

The out-door meetings were continued, the converts formed into classes, and the Primitive Methodist Connection organized in 1810. In 1877 it numbered, including its ministers, over two hundred thousand members.

In America camp-meetings served to introduce and give homogeneity to a membership otherwise estranged and heterogeneous. They supplied the place of large churches by furnishing room for the thousands. They drew the masses of other Churches, and leavened them with a new theology; these, in turn, bringing new utterances from their own pulpits. They partook of the rugged character of their natural surroundings; the towering forests, rocky heights, flowing streams, and open sky, added to the inspiration of the preacher, and wonderfully emphasized his fervid words,

that spoke of impending danger and proffered succor—of a yawning hell, a glorious heaven, and a dying, living, and interceding Saviour.

Justification, adoption, the witness of the Spirit, sanctification—immediate, clear, satisfactory—here found most enthusiastic advocates and faithful adherents.

The compensation, compared with the cost, of these meetings was great. The habits of the people were simple, their necessities few. The taste for a luxurious living, that impinges on the sensual and jeopardizes spirituality, had not yet been cultivated nor indulged. Sacrifices, however, were often made in preparing for and attending camp-meetings, that shame those of better opportunities. To the youthful reader a brief description of that which rapid development has rendered almost obsolete may be interesting.

Tents with shingle roofs, carpeted floors, and papered walls, were then unheard-of luxuries, while cottages with historic names, costing thousands of dollars, with all the appointments and surroundings of city elegance, were unthought of. A few yards of muslin, that could be made to do double duty, first as tent, then as wearing apparel; a few rude benches, frequently improvised from provision boxes; a table of the same material, or of

rough boards supported by sticks cut from the site of the tent; beds of straw and blankets; sheets suspended from the tent roof for partitions, formed dormitory, parlor, sitting-room, and furniture; while all out-doors—not preempted by the neighbors—constituted a spacious kitchen, with blazing fire, endless chimney, and the accompaniments of shade, shelter, and sunshine. Or, perchance, a covered wagon supplied the aforenamed apartments for a whole family, and for all the neighbors as guests.

These denizens of the wood were not there to fish, except for men; nor hunt, except for the lost; nor yet to play croquet. Neither had they time to boat, coquet, or talk finance, politics, or law. Here were children whose wayward lives had cost fond parents many sleepless nights of prayer and weeping; husbands, over whose sinful living affectionate wives had long interceded; parents, whose children's pious example was to them an abiding reproof. Here were neighbors, employers, and *employes*, brought to the meeting by earnest appeals; sometimes by a strategy as deep as was the ardor of the zeal that prompted it. Here all the soldiers of the King, disciplined by lives of "watchfulness unto prayer"—by "faith's strong grip, where reason lost its hold"—by trial, labor, and pain—massed their

forces for the defeat and capture of his rebel subjects.

These meetings were often held at the expense of a cultivated taste, since formalism and etiquette were sacrificed on the altar of a compassionate zeal. Modulated tones, studied postures, artistic singing, and rhetorical sermons were at a discount with those whose home efforts had failed to save their friends, especially so since this might be the last chance. They had not been privileged with the improved (?) teachings of our day, or, if they had, were slow to learn. They regarded hell as a place, and a bad one; heaven as another place, and a good one; while no mercy-bridge had yet been made to span the "fixed gulf" between the two. To them the devil was a person; so was the Holy Ghost. The latter reproved the sinner of sin, and assured him of pardon when forgiven. Death was the end of probation's only stadium, and introduced its captive or its captor to the wail of eternal remorse or to the triumphant shout of everlasting joy. Realizing these truths, no wonder they were in earnest!

The camp-meeting was sometimes a fine field for the discipline and display of muscular Christianity. The roughs of society, encouraged too often by more refined persecutors, would take advantage of defective law—or no law—

to annoy, and, if possible, destroy the meeting. Hooting, yelling, whistling, and the discharge of fire-arms, were sometimes the signals for a charge upon the altar or the preachers' stand; but they were the signals, too, for a counter charge "by men unused to fear." They were not as deliberate as was the Quaker who said to the burglar in his house, "Friend, look out; I'm going to shoot just where thee stands;" but, striking right and left, would put to flight the alien armies. Sometimes they captured the leaders, and extorted promises of good behavior, often to be fulfilled in godly sorrow and complete reformation.

These early camp-meetings were generally held at the expense of a rigid observance of the Christian Sabbath; people often going long distances in the morning, returning in the evening, and coming in contact on the road and in the encampment with influences damaging to moral character. Yet let it ever be remembered that—not as now—their errand was to hear truths not preached in Churches which they left or passed. The tables where was *regularly* spread the food for which the famishing souls of the unfed masses of this new nation hungered were "few and far between." Nor let it be forgotten, that, as estimated by these pioneers, the shock to refined taste, and the cost to muscular force and Sabbath ob-

servance, found ample compensation in the hundreds often converted at a single meeting, and in the revival fire carried to home Churches, and to points in the wilderness where no Gospel had yet been preached. Thus frequently were formed the nuclei for new classes, Churches, and Sunday-schools. Thus, too, were often laid the foundations for church buildings, and for that growth in temporal and spiritual prosperity characteristic of our first century. As it was in the older States fifty years ago, so is it now in many of the new ones.

The great white throng of the apocalyptic vision has received recruits by myriads from the ranks of our camp-meeting converts through all these years; while many of the most efficient workers and liberal givers of other communions, as well as our own, have received indelible religious impressions, if not their seal of pardon, amid the excellent glory of these tabernacle gatherings.

Conferences, churches, and ministers multiplied. Large circuits were divided and subdivided. Stations were formed where needed; some, where not needed. Our membership increased in half a century from a handful to a million and a half, and our ministry from a few hundred to ten thousand.

The increase of ministerial service; the protracted revival efforts, continuing sometimes

for months, with two services on Sabbath, and, in many places, every night in the week; the breaking down of denominational prejudices, and the preaching from most pulpits of our land of a present, free, and full salvation; the contrast between home comforts and luxuries and the absence of them at the average encampment, coupled with the difficulty of preserving order, together with a marked decrease in the number of conversions, suggested and hastened in our older conferences the discontinuance of the old-time Methodist camp-meeting.

Meanwhile, however, earnest efforts were being made to perpetuate the departing power and glory of camp-meetings by utilizing the popular love for them, so long fostered, as also the facilities for travel, and the growing demands for rural rest. To this end organizations were effected under acts of incorporation; grounds were rented or bought, and re-rented or sold, by some associations. Thus towns have grown up, with a few permanent and many transient residents, and been christened with euphonious names, followed by the term camp-meeting. Other associations erected tents or cottages, to be rented to camp-dwellers during the camp-meeting or the season, much attention being paid to laying out and improving the grounds, and to the physical

comfort and convenience of the tent-holders and visitors. At this time the large encampments claimed by our own denomination number nearly one hundred; to which may be added very many smaller ones, permanent or transient.

Some other denominations, having adopted or modified our form of government, accepted our standard doctrines, and appropriated much of our machinery, have not been slow to adjust themselves to this department of Church enterprise.

CHAPTER II.

CAMP-MEETINGS: THEIR HELPS AND HINDERANCES — ABUSES AND THEIR ORIGIN — RESPONSIBILITY.

MANY of the associations spoken of in the preceding chapter were organized under the most favorable conditions for spiritual results, and controlled by men of wisdom and piety; men whose first and constant aim is the conversion of souls and the strengthening of the Church. The meetings held under their direction have been wonderfully successful, a blessing to those attending, and a source of immense moral power to the Churches within the radius of their influence.

Other associations, however — alas, how many! — conceived by a spirit of speculation, and born of worldly affection; or, perchance, originated by men of good motives but low standard of morals; have incorporated many of the objectionable features of the early camp-meeting, with few or none of its redeeming traits. The meetings thus organized and controlled have been a reproach to our Church, and in some cases a disgrace to the Christian religion. The saddest thought in this connection is, that many of us of the ministry have,

perhaps unintentionally, become partners in the wrong by quietly acquiescing, or but feebly remonstrating.

It is an anomaly in Church history which finds striking parallels in the secular orders of Romanism in the ecclesiastical world and in the transportation "lines" connected with railroads in the commercial world that Methodism should permit the purchase and disposal, in her name, of valuable real estate, amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars, yet not, in the language of the Discipline, "deeded in trust that said premises shall be used, kept, maintained, and disposed of as a place of divine worship;" nor yet as a place of resort, (?) or retreat, (?) or amusement; (?) nor "for the use," in any way, "of the ministry and membership of the M. E. Church;" but deeded simply to trustees or directors, and their successors in office.

In some of their charters all of the trustees must be members of the M. E. Church; in others, two thirds of them; in others, a majority; while in many others even this precaution is not taken, and we find Methodist camp-meetings, so called, controlled by members of other Churches, and even non-professors, blasphemers, drunkards, gamblers, and liquor-sellers—men who care less for Methodism than does the hireling for the flock. True,

the act of incorporation may make a Methodist presiding elder or pastor the *ex-officio* manager of its meetings; but since the directors control the question of Sunday traffic, amusements, collections, and general order, the spiritual director becomes an *ex-officio* cipher, and the spiritual interests of the meeting are largely dependent on the good-will of a body of men who, like Demetrius, are more interested in their craft than in the Gospel, or, like Simon the sorcerer, would "make gain of godliness."

Many of these organizations are amenable to no department of the Church whose banner they set up, and by means of whose bugle call they entice the people to their patronage. They can with equal facility defy the legislative, judicial, and executive departments of our economy. The acts of Quarterly, Annual, and General Conferences may by them be regarded with indifference or contempt. The respectful requests—touching moral questions—of bishops, presiding elders, pastors, and Church officers (even though tenting on their grounds) may be tossed in air as carelessly as does the athlete his club, or the acrobat his sand bag. These mixed boards of management, answerable only to themselves, to the stock-holders, (themselves again,) and to the civil law, which they frequently violate, may

take it upon themselves to make and unmake presiding elders, or even bishops, or perchance to say who shall fill important stations in their patronizing territory, only those preachers being eligible who indorse and advertise *their* camp-meeting *as it is.*

The general conduct of the temporalities of the encampment may be such as to chagrin Methodist laymen who care for the good name of their Church and the morals of society, and so to prevent their attendance; but then, such inducements of health, recreation, and good living may be held out to the general public as shall fill the tents and cottages with those of other communions, and of no communion. These, with the formalists of our own Church, may constitute a dress-parading, pleasure-seeking community, ready to tacitly thank the Methodists for providing a respectable popular resort, and so much cheaper, too, than is Saratoga, Cape May, or Long Branch. They may listen attentively to the word preached; or, which is more probable, herd together according to caste or social affinity, and even refuse to hear the Gospel when brought to their tent doors.

It might occur that this temporizing policy should infect many of the preachers, particularly the younger ones, each of whom, called upon to preach but one of the thirty sermons

necessary for the ten days, and hearing much complaint against the plainness of those preceding him, made by the fashionable hearers with itching ears, or by the stock-holding directors with itching palms, should make "the cross of Christ a peg on which to hang his tawdry rags of speech," and leave the stand on which his flowery periods and ornate sentences had been exhibited amid hosannas to the preacher instead of halleluias to Jesus.

It might occur, that the curiosity of the people should, from service to service, be so wrought upon by the announcement of coming great men—who, perhaps, do not arrive—as that Jesus should be left without, in the manger of the stable of their thoughts and affections.

It might occur, that many of the young people, children of the members of other Churches tenting on the grounds, should become convicted and converted, or, enamored with our methods or charmed with our simplicity, piety, or zeal, become members of our Church, and thus subject us to the charge of proselyting; but it has not so occurred, to any great extent, for many years. It has happened, that many of our own young people, brought in contact with those who sneer at the apparent extravagances of the few simple souls who think themselves at camp-meeting, and sing,

pray, and shout as in other years, are thus led into other Churches, the members of which have abandoned their own *effete* doctrines, and are now teaching our theology, singing our songs, manipulating our machinery, complimenting our greatness, and accommodating our members.

CHAPTER III.

Camp-meetings and Sabbath Desecration.

To prayer ! for the day that God has blest
Comes tranquilly on, with its welcome rest.
It speaks of creation's early bloom ;
It speaks of the Prince who burst the tomb.
Then summon the spirit's exalted powers,
And devote to heaven the hallowed hours.—Ware.

PERHAPS the most flagrant abuses connected with the irresponsible mismanagement of many modern encampments are the incentives to, and the occasion furnished for, Sabbath desecration.

We state a fact patent to all when we say that there has been in this country during the twenty years last past a lamentable lowering of the public estimate of the sanctity of the Christian Sabbath. This, in part at least, has grown out of the immense accessions to our population from the debauched classes of the old world. Many of them "left their country for their country's good," and are the legitimate product of a statecraft that knows no Sabbath.

It is, too, the result of the indirect bribery practiced by great corporations in whose arith-

metic the God-force is not a factor, as well as of the Sabbath marching, fortress building, and fighting, incident to the most gigantic war of modern times.

True, we have won some decisive victories over the moral Vandals who seek to pervert liberty into license, but more frequently we have yielded without a struggle, or been intoxicated with ephemeral success. Like Hannibal, who, at the head of the Carthaginians defeated the Romans, and then engaged in drunkenness and rioting till defeated in turn by the valiant Scipio, so we have huzzaed so lustily over the Sabbath closing of an exhibition occurring but once in a hundred years, and lasting even then but for six months, that we have failed to recover sufficient breath to more than feebly remonstrate against opening the same gates to a gaping, godless crowd through all the Sabbaths of the year, and, if God forbear, through the uncounted years of the oncoming future.

Our Sabbath laws are practically a dead letter: first, because of the general indifference to their existence, violation, and execution; and, secondly, because of the loose interpretation placed upon them by our courts. Corporations—by threats of no work and no bread—compel large forces of men to engage on the Sabbath day on works of construction or repairs, because thus time is economized, and

time is money. Stock trains must run through on Sunday, because to unload and rest the stock would make it cost the speculator a half cent more per pound, and cents make dollars, and dollars dominate. Coal trains started on Saturday evening must run all day on Sunday to reach their destination in the evening, or on Monday morning, because trade is dull, there are competing roads, and dividends must not be passed. Oil trains must be moved for the same reason. Mails must be carried and post-offices opened because business and pleasure combine to demand it, and "*there are millions in it.*" Passenger trains, three a day, both ways, fast and slow, must go whistling, rattling, and thundering over our land, disturbing the peace and quiet of large communities, insulting the memories of the heroic spirits who founded our empire, and educating American youth to regard the Sabbath as other days. Corporations forget that a conscience compulsively educated to defy Divine law, will voluntarily defy human codes enacted for the protection of persons and property.

Government stamps its coin, "In God we trust," and then insults him by carrying its mails, opening its post-offices, dress-parading its armies, and doing much department and office business on that day which he has commanded to be kept holy. It thus compels the

violation of civil and moral law, and then, for some minor offense, shoots the men whose consciences it has debauched. Gin mills, beer saloons, tobacco shops, drug stores, and in many places bazaars of all kinds, solicit and receive large Sabbath patronage.

Iron furnaces, that can at any time without serious damage be blank-charged for twenty-four hours for repairs, or to settle disputes between labor and capital, must run every Sabbath lest they "*chill*," and ruin the proprietors.

Mine and motive power repairs must be made on the Sabbath, that mining and moving may proceed regularly on Monday, and no money be lost. The farmer garners his grain, the woodman floats his lumber, and the publisher prints his paper filled with secular thought, which finds its way into religious families to take the place of God's word; and it is all done because human reason has become more potent in the question of profit and loss than is God's law.

Ministers of Puritan antecedents ride on regular railroad trains between their appointments, and others, of highest office and standing in the Church, make long journeys on the Sabbath, thus helping soulless corporations to an apology for contempt of law, and at the same time encouraging the moral dissipation of their business-loving and pleasure-seeking fel-

low-travelers. Others are found among excursionists on the street cars, against the running of which they preached and remonstrated but ten years ago.

For five years, however, God has been teaching us to rest, if there can be rest amid stagnation, decay, and bankruptcy. Mills, looms, mines, and railroads have stood still. God has said, "Thus far, Avarice, but no farther." It seems a poetic as well as retributive justice that makes the law's penalty so sad a reminder of the law's violation. We write thus, not as a pessimist, nor yet to censure or upbraid, but to bring forward cumulative evidence of the decadence of the popular estimate of the holy day.

Alarming, however, as is the picture just painted, a still more dangerous tendency of the times is every-where apparent. We refer to the disposition to make the Christian Sabbath a holiday—to bring it down to the level of the Sabbath of Continental Europe, where rural excursions are indulged in by Protestant and Romanist alike; where tea and beer gardens, theaters, horse-races, boat-races and dances, claim and secure the attention of the people; where intemperance, gaming, and wasting profligacy prevail to an extent found only among the devotees of the revised edition of the "*Book of Sports.*"

This peril of the Christian Sabbath is greater than that from mere secularization—first, because more subtle; and, secondly, because human laws, venerable with age, are at hand to assist reform when right reason and revelation assert their authority in again defining works of necessity and charity. Moral suasion will be but little aided by legal prohibition in its endeavor to checkmate the ingenious devices of depraved nature for mere physical recreation (so called) and amusement, no matter how damaging to the mental, moral, and material interests of our people. Useful labor is less enervating than bacchanalian sports—a Sabbath work-day less injurious than a Sabbath play-day; because the latter squanders hard-earned wages that the former would increase, and begets mischief incident to idleness. The protest of Christianity and wise statesmanship against the one, should be emphasized against the other.

Already have we made dangerous strides in the direction of the Sabbath holiday. Prior to the present business depression, railroad centers—villages, towns, and cities—under the unnatural *stimulus* of war, attracted unwieldy populations from other countries, and from the rural portions of our own. Misdirected philanthropy said that these overcrowded, toiling multitudes must have one day in seven in the

country, and that day must be the Sabbath. This implied railroad trains, steamboats and stages, picnic grounds, sea-side resorts, beer gardens, and open parks. The Christian Church, after feeble remonstrance, yielded to what appeared to be inevitable, and now grieves over the success of infidels, rationalists, Jews, Socialists, and religious formalists, in so far destroying the public conscience on so vital an issue. The logic of events, as directed by our kind Father, demonstrates that these over-crowded myriads need seven days each week in the country, and thousands are forced to accept the priceless boon; but Sunday excursions have a tenacious hold on the habits of many of our people, and they indulge in them, notwithstanding God's providence, judgments, and law.

Now, what has all this to do with camp-meetings? We answer, Much, very much; or, rather, camp-meetings as conducted by us in the older States—with few rare exceptions—during the last twenty years, have had much to do with all this.

Under the cover of religion—in the livery of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and with the purpose of advancing her interests—so-called camp-meeting associations have in many places been organized. These, by systematic advertising of the natural and artistic advantages of their grounds as places of resort, re-

tirement, or amusement—by coalitions with railroad, steamboat, and livery companies—by frequent and long-continued announcement of the presence on the Sabbath of celebrated preachers—and, in truth, by all the devices known to a religio-secular policy—have induced vast crowds of people to go great distances on the Lord's day morning only to return in the evening.

In many localities, other denominations that pattern after us, with less tact and experience and fewer facilities for commanding respect and preserving order, have sometimes formed a partnership with gamesters, and even rum-sellers. Thus the camp-meeting term has been continued through much of the warm season, the Sabbaths of which have been by large numbers devoted to car, carriage, or steamboat riding, and promenading, all in the name of religion. The logic that encourages our own people to go on one Sabbath to our own camp-meeting, permits them to spend five Sabbaths in going to other camp-meetings, or lays us open to the charge of being narrow bigots.

These Sabbath camp-visitors are astir at an early hour. The streets resound with the rumble of their vehicles, or the rapid tread of their hurrying feet, as they hasten to the depot or the landing. Children taught to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" are familiar-

ized with the hurry and excitement inseparable from the preparation and journey for a day in the woods. Home congregations are much depleted, often destroyed. The preacher, sometimes glad of a day of rest, or anxious to hear a great sermon, or convinced by past experience that his congregation will be but a fragment, "takes time by the forelock," and spends the Sabbath at the encampment, thus leaving, frequently, the most reliable part of his membership without their regular services.

Many Sabbath-schools are left with few officers or teachers, and the lesson for the day is ignored. A few scholars go to the camp-meeting, but most of them, as sheep without shepherd or fold, roam the streets, or, in imitation of their teachers, seek enjoyment in leafy groves or beside purling streams, and there, perhaps, take their first lesson in Sabbath-breaking. A few Sabbaths thus spent, and we are confronted with the inquiry, "What becomes of our probationers?" or that other one, "How shall we retain our older scholars in the Sabbath-school?"

The pastor of one of our largest stations in a city near which are located several camp-grounds, writes as follows: "We have had seven Sundays of camp-meeting nonsense and —— within ten miles of the city this year. I hope that the God of all mercy and grace

will, by his infinite wisdom and omnipotence, prevent another such campaign, so far, at least, as the evil is concerned." This testimony, thus tersely put, accords with a large amount received by the writer from all parts of our connection. The picture may be as uninviting to the reader as to the author; but if the study of our history, institutions, and economy is simply for self-glorification rather than self-improvement, our movements will be backward and downward rather than forward and upward.

In a preceding paragraph we traced the Sabbath camp-visitor to the station or landing. The public conveyance, crowded so full as frequently to endanger the lives and limbs of the swaying multitude found in its seats, standing in its aisles, or clinging to its guards, rushes on, stopping only to increase its mingled burden of virtuous and vicious humanity; or, as during the month of August of this year, to disgorge some of its pleasure-seeking excursionists, who have taken advantage of the special train and cheap rates to visit the beer gardens of a large city through which the train passed.

In the meantime engineers, firemen, brakemen, conductors, baggage-masters, ticket-agents, and telegraph operators are forced to follow their usual vocation on the Lord's day;

thus disobeying his command, violating civil law, and becoming disqualified, by physical exhaustion, for careful service on the days that follow.

Horses are over-driven and their care-takers overworked, as are cooks, clerks, and servants at the encampment; and the quiet of vast communities—so conducive to a devotional spirit—is disturbed, if not destroyed. The passengers from the most distant points sometimes spend three or four hours on the road, in contact with questionable influences, and arrive at the meeting with poor preparation to listen to the sermon about to be delivered, or, as is frequently the case, already half finished.

The railroad authorities congratulate themselves on having done a pious thing in thus carrying, at reduced rates, so many persons to religious service, among whom are numbers of their own *employes*. In their own estimation they have really done a work of supererogation, and on the following Sabbath carry an equal number to the sea-side or the mountain top. Reminded of their wrong-doing, they justify themselves and publish their own inconsistency by declaring that "the real object of the camp visitors was identical with that of those going to the sea-side, though ostensibly different. And, hence, if right to run the train in one case it was in the other." The Church member thus riding to the camp will find less

of conscience with which to protest against the sea-side excursion. Though there is much sophistry in the railroad apologists' reasoning, there is sufficient truth to cause the Church to call a halt, and, in order to meet squarely and successfully the most important question in American ethics, "to heal herself," "by abstaining from the very appearance of evil."

That the train run to the encampment is a regular one, and hence would have gone if no camp-meeting had been held, only increases the responsibility of camp authorities; since, by making their grounds accessible to those arriving on such trains, they furnish the railroad authorities an excuse, which for similar reasons may be applied to other sections of their road and other Sabbaths of the year, and thus to every section of their road, and every Sabbath of the year.

But what of those going by private conveyance? We answer, that in proportion as they journey unnecessarily to reach public worship, (of which fact their Bible-educated consciences must judge,) and in so doing subject themselves to dissipating influences, and exact unnecessary labor from the brutes that furnish the motive power, do they displease God, injure their own souls, and by example damage public morals. Nay, more: the camp-meeting association furnishing the occasion for, and in-

ducement to, such wrong-doing must share largely in its penalty. Well has one said, "Sabbath worship is a local matter, and persons should stay on the Lord's day where they are; going only, as a rule, to the nearest place of prayer. Christ tarried over Sabbath at Bethany on his way to Jerusalem, and that, too, in passover week." If this rule, to which there are exceptions, would prevent people from traveling several miles in country or city, and passing as many weak Churches of their own faith in order to reach a strong one, and thus escape burdens, and find a flock wearing the same quality of wool as themselves, then amen! and amen!!

If the Sabbath-day's journey (less than a mile) of the old Jewish Rabbins were made the limit of our Sabbath traveling, though it might savor of the ceremonial law that ended in Christ, or be a potent reminder of the forged Blue Laws of Connecticut, it might, nevertheless, be promotive of man's happiness and God's glory. "Remember the Sabbath (not seventh) day to keep it holy," belongs to the moral code, which Christ came "not to destroy, but to fulfill." In harmony with this saying was his declaration that "the Sabbath was made for *man*." Not simply to the Jew, but to mankind in all ages and countries, does it extend its beneficent provisions for rest and worship.

At the encampment, people of both sexes, of all ages, sizes, and complexions, of all religions and of none, by hundreds, frequently by thousands, sometimes by tens of thousands, with appetites for the "bread that perisheth" whetted to keenness by an early breakfast and a long ride, listen to a sermon, or a piece of one, or, as is often true in such cases, to none. They have come with mixed motives, and quickly become the victims of an aimless reverie, or the active participants in a shameless revelry. They crowd the grounds, throng the aisles, elbow the tents and their occupants, and, by an aggregated vastness, paralyze all attempts of the police to maintain a quiet in harmony with the objects of the day, and render all aggressive effort for Christ difficult, if not impossible. The sermon ended, they march and countermarch in single, double, and parallel columns. They file right and left by ones and twos, by platoons, companies, and even regiments, till the moist earth becomes mud, and the dry earth dust. Armed with partners, and accoutered with hampers, whips, canes, and canteens, they are more terrible to those seeking spiritual results than would be "an army with banners." The wood surrounding the encampment is filled at an early hour with those who came to "sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play." Here, in groups varying from

couples to dozens, they spread their dinners, accompanied often with intoxicating drinks. This is followed by smoking, jesting, merry-making, and sometimes gaming, reminding the passer-by of a French *café* or a German beer garden. At the boarding tent door are vast throngs, ready to crowd and be crowded in order to secure their rights, the pasteboard pledge of which has been bought and paid for on this Sabbath day, perhaps during divine service. Often the crowding is continued to a second, third, and fourth table, extending into the hour of afternoon worship, so large is the number of hungry and impatient visitors. Then, too, the restaurant, supplied with the luxuries of the season as well as with the necessaries of the hour, finds constant patronage, often no regard being paid to the hour of service. This is so, first, because of the large number of persons who have been induced to come on the Sabbath day, and who, unfortunately for the cause of Christ, could not leave their appetites at home, nor yet be fed with the ease and order that characterized the feeding of the five thousand; and, secondly, because the boarding house and restaurants are leased to men at so high a rate as to compel the renter to take every advantage or lose money.

Tent holders and cottage owners complain that the Sabbath, so far from being a day of

rest and worship, becomes a day for social entertainment, bodily fatigue, and spiritual wasting. Those longing for the conversion of souls, the strengthening of believers, and a reflex influence on the Churches of the district, have learned to sadly forebode the Sabbath. They are frequently compelled to see the fire, blown to a blaze on the preceding days, suddenly extinguished: the Master wounded in the house of his friends, and the enemy in possession of a decisive victory. The few hear or remember the sermons: the many, not coming for that purpose, hear but little and remember less. They have talked on every subject but Christ and his cause. They reach their homes at a late hour; if members of the Church, with upbraiding consciences; if not, with at least degraded notions of the Sabbath and its defenders. It may be urged that God's people, though but a handful, with God on their side, should be able to captivate these teeming multitudes by means of the Gospel charm; but let it be remembered that many of them are members of some Church, not a few of our own, yet most of them, sad to say, are satisfied with present attainments in grace, and have seized upon the occasion afforded by a great Church for a Sabbath of animal content: the occasion forming, also, the excuse. The balance of them, having no vows to pay, congrat-

ulate themselves on being as good as these basket-bearing, Sabbath-journeying, merry-making Christians; and, asking only for stones, scorpions, and serpents, because they look like bread, eggs, and fish, of course get what they ask, but not what they need. Such a camp-meeting is not attractive to those of most vigorous faith, nor do they as tent-holders attend in great numbers. The few earnest workers present meet these Sabbath-coming throngs with a painful consciousness of the weakness of their own faith; weak, because the conditions of faith had not been met, either in the motives that prompted the conception of the enterprise or in its subsequent management. Hence, instead of overawing and overpowering these unsaved multitudes, they, for the time being, are readily absorbed by and assimilated to them.

The encampment may be the embodiment of secular respectability and good order, and yet the religious impressions be few and fleeting, and the spiritual results be very inadequate to the outlay of effort and means.

The writer will never forget the sorrowful, yet ludicrous, discomfiture of the praying ones at an evening service, the closing one of a day such as he has described. The sermon was one of seeming power, by one of the most vigorous and thoughtful of our young men.

The responsive ejaculations were earnest and apparently unctuous. The fifty ministers present seemed ready to respond to the ardent appeals made by the leader at the close of the sermon, for personal effort in the congregation. The invitation was given to sinners to come to the altar, but most of them turned their backs upon it, and joined their comrades in the outskirts in talking, promenading, smoking, flirting, or hurrying homeward. At the end of an hour, during which grave doctors of divinity had paced the aisles, and staid presiding elders had rubbed their hands in pious desire, and there had been much singing, exhortation, and prayer, we looked for results, and found at the altar one little girl—only one—a member of the Church, who had backslidden, perhaps at the camp-meeting, and wanted renewing, an experience into which she could have been easily led by pastor, leader, or teacher, in the home, the class, or the Sabbath-school.

True, we may count effort as well as achievement; and bread cast upon the waters may be gathered *many* days hence; and a bow drawn at a venture may send an arrow somewhere; and a little Sunday-school girl is not to be despised; but do not revelation and reason conspire to affirm that so small an apparent harvest, after so much apparent sowing, predicates a fault somewhere? That fault is not

in the seed, nor yet wholly in the soil, but in the sowing. If those who are responsible for the management of the meeting do by open gates encourage Sunday trains, Sunday throngs, and Sunday holidays; if they offer the occasion for a Sunday gathering of unwieldy proportions, most of the individuals of which have come, as to a county fair, to see and be seen; they need not wonder at their own inability to exercise the faith so necessary in appropriating the motive power that alone can drive the machinery of human endeavor. If they induce great numbers to spend many hours of the holy Sabbath, in journeying and consequent dissipation, that should be spent at their home churches in devotional worship, let them bear the opprobrium that follows defeat. But, alas! not only do those unsaved remain unsaved, but in those of the household of faith is begotten a degraded estimate of the Sabbath, the precursor of a spiritual decay that ends in spiritual death.

He who may, but does not, prevent a wrong, is certainly an accomplice of the wrong-doer; and individual members of a corporation cannot evade responsibility for the sins of that corporation. St. Paul recognized the sin of unnecessarily furnishing to others the occasion for sinning, when he declared, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the

world standeth." That is, "Rather than give occasion for a Christian to sin against, and so to harden, his conscience, that he should return to idolatry and perish, I would not only abstain from all *meats offered to idols*, but I would *eat no flesh*, should I exist through the whole course of time; but would live on the herbs of the field rather than cause my brother to stumble and fall into idolatry and final ruin." So, if open gates at camp-meeting on Sabbath furnish the occasion for a great amount of evil, not balanced by a great amount of good, and help the enemies of the Sabbath to arguments and instruments for its destruction, let the gates be closed. Further: if necessary to the protection of the sanctity of that day, let camp-meetings be abolished and no more be held "while the world stands," for, as another has said, "We can do without camp-meetings, but cannot do without the Sabbath." It may be said, that while there is much evil incident to open gates and large crowds, there is, also, much good. This is true; souls are sometimes converted in great numbers, while others receive impressions that lead to conversion. It is also true, that great truths uttered by great men find a ready hearing by thousands of attentive listeners; but the most careful observers are quite unanimous in the opinion that the evil far outweighs the good, and that every

attempt to solve the question under the rule of profit and loss leaves a fearful balance in the debit column.

It is said that "The wicked, if not at camp-meeting, would be somewhere, engaging in their wickedness." Perhaps so; but is it even politic to provide for them the means to mass and marshal such forces as, in the very nature of the case, the Christian hosts cannot successfully attack, nor yet maintain the ground previously occupied? Is it wise to help them to destroy the corner-stone of Christianity by the agencies employed in thus enabling them to concentrate their armies? Would it not be wiser to encourage—if need be, to compel, as far as we may—the observance of that day without which all is lost; and at the same time leave the armies of the enemy at their homes, to be divided and attacked in detail by the Church, on this day when all her soldiers are under arms, her arsenals open, and her batteries unmasked? If even wise to congregate an undue proportion of the unconverted at camp-meetings, is not that time the most appropriate, when—there being no worship in their homes — they are withdrawn from the seductive influences of the bar-room, the saloon, and the brothel? In short, on some secular day of the week?

This leads us to notice another objection to

closed gates, namely: "Many of the poor, who must labor hard for the support of their families, should have an opportunity to engage in the delightful services of the camp on the Sabbath day, and hear sermons from the representative men of the Church." This would have some force, if these poor people did not take time for rest, recreation, or amusement at will. The picnic, menagerie, and horse-race—or, what is the same, the county fair—attract them from their work and wages, and lead to the spending of much money previously earned; carrying corporations sometimes furnish transportation gratis to their *employes* to visit places of amusement, and might be induced to do as much for religious meetings, if those desiring to attend manifested as much interest in the latter as in the former. If, for mere recreation, many days' wages are sacrificed, while for religious privileges one day's wage is regarded too much, we may reasonably infer that they choose the Sabbath camp-meetings rather than the menagerie as a place of amusement, both because they can do so, and, because, in so doing they retain a measure of self-respect and the respect of those who, in the name of religion, entice them to attend. But if going to the camp-meeting on Sabbath be productive of more harm than good, let them remain at home, even though "they

die without the sight." Many who never saw a camp-meeting have lived usefully and died triumphantly.

It is further objected, that to close the gates on the Sabbath is to antagonize one darling specialty embraced in the "whosoever-will" invitation, and thus to do violence to the genius of Methodism. But common sense would say, and revelation would not contradict it, Admit only such members, and at such times, as will enable those who are responsible for the success of the meeting to accomplish, in the most decisive way, the object for which the meeting was organized. Jesus, when he had a great work to do, sometimes "put out" those who were already in. Popular metropolitan Churches, such as Spurgeon's, Beecher's, Moody's, and Talmage's, claim this right, and are sustained by public sentiment. Methodism, in her early history and latest law, admitted to some of her services only those who held tickets, and those only at certain hours. This did not prevent her people from singing,

> "The happy gates of gospel grace
> Stand open night and day;"

nor did it endanger the freedom of the truth.

It is objected, again, that very high fences must be built, and even then noisy throngs would loiter without, to the annoyance of

those within. This objection, with many oth ers equally puerile, finds easy refutation in the history of the few associations that close their gates, as, also, in the provisions of common law that make "every man's house his castle," and attach penalties to the commission of nuisances. Finally, one answer covers all objections: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

"Fresh glides the brook and blows the gale,
But yonder halts the quiet mill;
The whirring wheel, the rushing sail,
How motionless and still!
So rest, O weary heart; but lo!
The church spire glistening up to heaven,
To warn thee where thy thoughts should go
The day thy God hath given."—*Bulwer.*

CHAPTER IV.

CAMP-MEETINGS: THEIR UTILITY FURTHER CONSIDERED — ARGUMENTS AND OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

NO argument sustaining the utility of the camp-meeting, properly conducted, is any longer necessary, since not only have the objections urged fifty years ago to the camp-meeting *per se* been abandoned; but, like many other good things introduced by Methodism, this institution has been adopted—sometimes re-christened—by those who once most vehemently denounced—or most bitterly derided it.

Yet there are many persons, among whom are prominent ministers and laymen in our own Church, who, as the result of careful observation, believe that camp-meetings, aggregating them, as conducted for several years last past, have injured rather than aided the cause of Christ. Evidently this belief grows out of the *perversions* of the institution. This is the result of the indifference of the Church in its organic character to that which, if neglected, degenerates and degrades, while, if cared for, appreciates and benefits.

It is also said that if the one million and a half of dollars spent by Methodists alone each

year in connection with camp-meetings, found instead the channels of local Church enterprise and connectional benevolence, preachers would be paid, churches be saved from the sheriff's clutch, church extension take a new departure, and our missionary debt be quickly liquidated. All true, if the premise be true. But the objection is based on a hypothesis not likely to be met. On the other hand, this amount would doubtless be used for a species of self-gratification more inconsistent with our profession, if possible, than that prompted even by the average modern camp-meeting.

The objections based on "Sabbath desecration," "money mania," and other immoralities and irregularities, lie not against the institution, but against the incidental and unnecessary evils; since actual experience has demonstrated our ability to successfully conduct such meetings shorn of these evils.

We need camp-meetings to neutralize the selfishness that ever threatens local Churches long isolated, and to strengthen the connectional bond, without which our peculiar form of government tends to disintegration; to organize, from forces varied as are the localities whence they come, an influence that like the Damascus blade, forged from ores brought from many and distant mines, may aid the Gospel in "piercing even to the dividing asunder of

soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." We can use them as magnets, to wholly withdraw for a time the minds of the unconverted from the secularizing influences of the farm, the mine, the shop, and the counting-room, and thus converge on these frozen hearts the unobstructed rays of "the Sun of Righteousness." Or, to change the figure, to bruise and break these flinty hearts by repeated and long-continued strokes from the gospel hammer.

The statement that at fifty large camp-meetings held in one year, by associations owning an aggregate of over four hundred and fifty thousand dollars worth of property, and securing the attendance of eight thousand tent holders, with an estimated attendance of one million transient visitors, there should be less than one thousand conversions, and a general wail from the pastors of Churches laboring near the encampments because their people had been demoralized and society injured, is not necessarily a reflection on camp-meetings, but on our improper methods of holding them. If, like children tickled with their toys, we have become so infatuated with the magnitude and glitter of our machinery as to forget to appropriate by faith the motive-power without which it remains an inert mass of polished deformity, it is no fault of the machinery, but of those who run it. May God save us from another such

record! A thousand souls! it would be sacrilege to attempt an estimate of their value, but, all other things being equal, ten thousand souls are more valuable. As a denomination we have grown great notwithstanding, rather than because of, our follies. It is but natural to suppose that we should have grown greater had those follies been timely corrected.

Camp-meetings should do for our people during the busy summer what revival efforts do for them during the winter, namely, bring the constitutionally indifferent and sluggish in contact with those who live near God, and whose glowing faces and impassioned hearts are alike a benediction and a doxology to those who see the brightness of the one and feel the throbbing pulsations of the other. They thus practically apply the principle of "the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak," by helping the latter to a new lease of spiritual life.

They should afford opportunity for our people, though far removed from the metropolis, to hear sermons from the best talent of the Church.

They should, also, be schools of observation and drill for those who desire to become proficient in the art of soul-saving; for here should be most prominent the labors of those who, by their long service and marked successes, are recognized as experts in this most important branch of our Master's husbandry.

They ought to be centers of spiritual light and heat, whence should radiate an influence to the surrounding Churches that will kindle revival fires and bring increased interest to the regular services. If prayer and class-meetings, Sunday-school and preaching service, do not have a better attendance and more unction after than before camp-meeting, it has been a failure.

CHAPTER V.

HOW TO MAKE THE CAMP-MEETING SUCCESSFUL—SCAFFOLDING—POPULAR RESORTS—REASONS FOR CLOSING GATES ON SABBATH.

IT is not enough that the act of incorporation makes the object of the camp-meeting association to provide for and hold a camp-meeting annually for a named conference, district, or circuit, since the modern perversion of the meaning of the term "camp-meeting" is evidence that, though bearing the name, it can be transformed into a mere theater for amusement, recreation, or speculation, with just enough religion to make it respectable, and, in some sense, profitable. Let the grounds be deeded, as some of them already are, "in trust, to be kept, maintained, and disposed of as a place of divine worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, subject to its discipline," etc. If this department of the Church is not subject to its discipline, "neither, indeed, can be," then so much the worse for the Church.

The circuit camp-meeting generally was, and, where still held, is, the creature of the quarterly conference. Its managers are members of that

body, elected by it, or at least amenable to it; so every camp-meeting association that bears our name, tacitly or expressly, should be answerable in some way to our Church, that, bearing its faults and foibles, we may also correct its mistakes, and have a chance at least to protect our interests.

Most modern associations are organized for the accommodation of one or more presiding elders' districts. Let the members of the association consist, then, of the presiding elder or elders, and preachers of the district or districts, together with one layman from each charge, to be appointed by the quarterly conference each year, while an executive committee can be invested with full power to act in all matters which shall promote the objects of the association. Or, if this seems too unwieldy, let some other plan be adopted, by which Methodism shall control her own, and at the same time secure the co-operation of those most interested. To attempt to manage a Church, or, what should be as securely guarded, a camp-meeting, on the stock principle—with the possibility (already realized in some places) of infidels, drunkards, liquor-dealers, and gamesters becoming its stockholders and even directors, and thus the ultimate authority in its management—is an insult to our ministry and membership. If the Church in its organic

capacity is not enough interested to inaugurate and continue a camp-meeting, it will scarcely appreciate or sustain one organized by self-constituted representatives, even though they be the most worthy of our communion.

But, again, provision should be made for extending a hearty welcome to the poorest of our people, by furnishing ground on which, if they choose, to pitch their humble tents, establish their own commissary, and spread their own table ; for here is a *sanctuary*, in which the rich and poor should meet together, recognizing God as "the maker of them all." If there be any place in our polity where, more than another, gold rings and goodly apparel should count nothing in determining preferment, let that place be the camp-meeting. Here "the poor of this world, chosen rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom," should find sweetest sympathy and most tender affection from those more favored with wealth. Here, distant from the asperities of business and the ever-varying, and in many cases most unreasonable, conflicts between labor and capital, should be exorcised the spirit of caste that in so many hearts threatens to dominate the spirit of Christ.

Inasmuch as "sowing to the flesh" is no part of the object of a Methodist camp-meeting, let the preparations for the physical man

be of that subdued character that good taste would approve in rendering them subordinate to spiritual results. Restaurants at the entrance, with flaming placards and a dazzling display of confectionery, interlarded with the somber shades of tobacco and cigars, are potent reminders of the palate and stomach rather than of the heart and conscience, and do much to encourage those who have been "filthy to be filthy still."

That the purposes of a camp-meeting and those of a mere resort are entirely dissimilar will readily be admitted by all whose concurrence can help our cause. Experience shows the difficulty of saying successfully, "Thus far resort, but no further." "Presto!" "Change!" "Camp-meeting ten days." They that have sought amusement will seek it still. This difficulty grows out of the law of continuity, the force of habit, or, if you please, the initial motive in coming to the encampment, and usually renders the attempt to combine the resort and the camp-meeting not only abortive, but sadly ludicrous. Thus mixed, it becomes too religious for a resort, and not enough so for a camp-meeting.

To enforce the rules making it the duty of tent-holders and visitors to come into the congregation, to cease talking and promenading, and to regard with feelings of devotion the

place where they have been permitted to talk, laugh, smoke, and perhaps play games, is to drive them from the grounds, since they were invited to come for physical recreation, and justice demands freedom. To fail to enforce the rules, or to have none—which is frequently the case—is to show our ability to begin a farce and end a tragedy.

To call that a Methodist camp-meeting which is so conducted as merely to escape the penalties of civil law, receive applause for respectability from the secular press, and barely prevent our own members from backsliding, while little or no aggressive movement is made toward the conversion of sinners, is a reproach to the Church, and a sad reminder of departed glory. In this hurrying age we need popular resorts, where, withdrawn from secular callings, business perils, domestic cares, and even literary pursuits, we may rest and recreate without hazarding reputation, character, or fortune, by contact with the gaming, drunkenness, and extravagance so prevalent at fashionable hostelries. But we need not call them camp-meetings, nor "hold the fort" till midnight, nor sleep on our arms, nor yet form "in line" at daylight; nor need we condemn ourselves if, through our instrumentality, all the health-seekers should not be converted; nor yet suffer the loss that always falls on the Church

when she sounds the reveille, arrays herself for conquest, and is defeated.

Our theology is of the heroic kind, that recognizes an ability and willingness on God's part to do any thing in the realm of the spiritual that in faith we ask him to do. There can be no failure in the performance of his part of the contract, but that which grows out of our neglect. Hence, to attempt to have a revival at camp or at home, and fail, is to publish our shame. Therefore, let us have camp-meetings, and let us have resorts, but let them never be married, or, if already joined, let them be divorced, and thus save a venerable institution of our beloved Zion from the degradation toward which it is rapidly tending.

As a rule, to which, as already intimated, there may be exceptions, we should fence our encampments, and keep the gates closed on Sabbath to all save those who live in the immediate neighborhood, and here find Church accommodations. These may be admitted on Sabbath morning, at a given hour, on tickets issued on Saturday. These restrictions should be adopted:—

1. For the purpose of defeating Sabbath haters, who visit our encampments for the same reason that they visit beer-gardens, and say, Give us, under protection of law, at all times, the privileges that we enjoy under the auspices

of the Methodist Episcopal and other Churches for a few Sabbaths each year, and we will be content.

2. For the protection of those who through sacrifice are regularly domiciled on the ground, and have outlined for themselves solid work for God and humanity, which should not be interfered with by an aimless, tramping multitude.

3. To save from disorganization and demoralization the Churches and communities of the patronizing territory.

4. That we may continue in practice what we have always been in theory, namely, firm advocates of Sabbath observance. Thus we should keep our Church in the advance line on this, as on every great moral question, which at no distant day may shake our country from center to circumference.

5. To increase the number of regular attendants, and proportionately increase the chances of successful meetings, since success depends less on the transient crowds than on the number who yield to continuously hearing the word and meditating upon it.

6. To secure the revenue necessary for current expenses; because then, instead of thousands with baskets bringing their own dinner on Sabbath, and thus making a picnic ground of the encampment at the expense of the association,

while apartments erected for renting are unoccupied, all rooms would be taken at fair rates, and at least several meals purchased by each person, thus solving one of the vexed problems connected with camp-meeting enterprises. But, if the reverse should prove true, and money be lost, take it as a providential indication, either that the supply of camp-meetings is in excess of the demand, or that, like our Churches, they should be supported by the contributions of those who believe in their utility, and enjoy their privileges.

7. It would enable us to admonish our people, especially the young, against the Sabbath vagrancy now so prevalent where the camp-meeting term is long, and thus save them and others from the dissipation that brings us face to face with the question, "What becomes of our probationers?"

8. It would show "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind," since we have failed by the aggregate results of modern camp-meetings, or by our attempted defense, to declare any good cause impelling us to the course we have pursued.

In short, as another has said, "It would, by removing all occasion for their arising, solve every vexed question of law, of morals, and of propriety, by which we are now troubled."

CHAPTER VI.

ALTAR WORK—SEED AND HARVEST—POLLY SCROGGS—PREPARATION AND CONCENTRATION—PERSONAL EFFORT—DRESS—CAUSE AND EFFECT—CONCLUSION.

THE best type of our membership, those most loved where best known, men and women of deep piety, sound judgment, and warm hearts, should, at the camp-meeting as at the home church, do the altar work. Seed is a prophecy of harvest, in kind as in quantity. The men with whom God plants a nation determine largely the character and spirit of those to follow through the onsweeping centuries. The men who organize a Church, do, by a species of natural selection — the power of affinity — gather men of like spirit to its services and sacraments. Likewise, as a rule, those who lead in revival effort attract those to the altar of like origin, history, and temperament. We would not exclude the poorest outcast from our sympathies and prayer, but every-where are found those whose *repeated* visits to our vestal fires for renewing have not helped them, but have hindered the cause. Private instruction or class-room drill is what they need, rather than the display incident to altar work in the public congregation. Our zeal for the "whosoever"

idea has frequently made our revival meetings a mob, instead of a well-disciplined army with a place for every soldier, and every soldier in his place. Preachers, fearing to "offend one of these little ones," sometimes allow the most unstable and characterless people of the neighborhood to monopolize, year after year, the attention of the membership as *quasi*-penitents, and afterward that of the congregation as chief instructors.

Polly Scroggs—called Polly, I presume, because she was a repeater—was first at the altar in her home church at every revival for three successive years. Scrubtown, where she stayed—when not somewhere else—changed itinerants each year; and Polly, to the delight of the recently-arrived pastor, and the infinite disgust of the congregation—including many thoughtful sinners, whose conviction had not thus far sufficiently neutralized their sense of the ludicrous to force them to the mourner's bench in such company—never failed to take advantage of the new pastor's strange surroundings, and start the revival, in the capacity of what the wicked boys called a "stool pigeon." Polly was known to have a fondness for camp-meetings; and as each of the fifty pastoral charges represented at the camp-meeting had at least one of her kind, none of whom in one sense were given to living beneath their privilege,

advantage was taken of the strange preachers and people to seek religion a fourth time, and thus secure more attention than they had either deserved or commanded since last camp-meeting, or than they will receive before the next one. By this repeated *public* repentance they are not helped, while the cause is hindered. It justly renders the meeting a by-word and a jest for those unfriendly to us, drives better people to other Churches, and pains beyond measure those who are solicitous for the greatest prosperity of the Church of their choice. All this can be avoided by an early organization of the best working talent from the various charges, led by a man who knows his duty and is not afraid to do it.

Experience has taught us the importance of *concentration* in revival effort. No thoughtful pastor would secure the services of thirty preachers to preach as many sermons at a meeting to be held but ten days; because, first, the curiosity of those he hoped to reach would rival their faith; constant novelty would promote diffusion of thought and loss of power. Secondly, if this were not so, and the tide of feeling should steadily rise in the congregation, the newly arrived preacher would not find himself in sympathy with the *spirit* of the meeting, which is necessarily a growth as well as a gift. If sin, nature, grace, the Gospel, those who

preach it and those who need it, are at camp-meeting what they are at home, then the methods so often adopted at the former are an admirable indication of "how not to do it." The time is past in this gospel-ribbed land for great revivals in church or camp without elaborate preparation. True, without it we may skim the froth of society, and repeat the process on the same scum year after year, to the disgust of sensible people in the Church and out of it, and thus drive from us those who could help the cause of Christ, or be helped by it. Long preparations and short meetings will, as a rule, accomplish more than short preparations and long meetings.

Exhaustive public effort, that leaves little vitality for the regular means of grace or for the fusing and molding of the crude material thus brought to the Master's workshop, may signalize defeat rather than victory. Tidal waves may lift us higher than the ordinary level, but must supplement rather than supplant the steady sailing that bears us further.

Steady, persistent work, enlisting the largest possible number of our members, and subsidizing all our resources, spiritual, social, financial, political, and domestic—under a pastorate limited only by law as to time and by human endurance as to intensity—is the demand of our time, rather than the ephemeral effort too

often indulged to mask the inefficiency of a long-continued indifference.

Every-where are those who have become familiar with the saber flash of the cavalry charge, and stand in serried lines, repelling year after year our spasmodic attempts to capture them for Christ. Many of them are our most staunch and reliable people, perhaps members of our congregations, supporters of our preachers, and contributors to our benevolences. If ever they are taken it will be by the siege process; man for man; spirit against spirit; magnetism *versus* magnetism; visits often repeated; prayers fervently offered; a specific faith for a specific case; letters filled with tender affection; in fact, a hand to hand conflict, in which the Christian warrior, his heart on fire with love, shall feel "this may be my last chance, but, be it so or not, this soul for Christ, if it takes a life."

Of course, the work may be consummated from the pulpit, or at the altar—probably will be; or in the love-feast, class-room, or prayer-meeting. But the real work of dominating a stubborn will by the power of an omnipotent love is done elsewhere. True, it is not independent of the means of grace named, since here, coupled with long-continued secret devotion, we get our prophecy and promise of success, as also our inspiration to achieve it.

May the time never come when our altar fires and camp fires shall be extinguished! May it soon come when every-where extra effort shall be preceded by extra preparation long continued; and supplemented by extra care of the "new born babes" whose nursing is no mean part of the mother's duty and privilege. A camp-meeting to which ministers and members have not brought "those who are almost persuaded" may claim the blessing of not being disappointed, because little was expected.

It is good to "go a-fishing;" but while we use the seine and net let us not forget that there are game fish in abundance in the deeper waters that only a carefully baited hook, manipulated by an expert angler, can either catch or keep.

Let us get ready for the camp-meeting by personal preparation; by a more complete consecration of self to God; by securing a keener realization of the fact that Christianity is not simply being, but doing: not pluming and grooming our own spiritual modes and moods, but—like Him whose name we bear—losing self to save others.

Let us secure the attendance at our camp-meetings of as many as possible of those with and for whom we have previously been laboring and praying, assisting, if need be, to provide for their bodily comfort while there.

The entire camp might with profit be dis-

tricted, and such a system of pastoral oversight be established as that no unconverted person could remain on the ground for a day without being brought under the influence of the Gospel as preached in the personal appeals of loving hearts, as well as that proclaimed from the preachers' stand.

Such extravagance in dress as will fix a barrier between the rich and the poor, and such provision for eating and drinking as will dull the spiritual perceptions and beget a sensual sloth, may well be discouraged.

Rigid formalism at one extreme, and nauseating cant at the other, may both be eliminated by impressing upon our people their privilege "to walk, leap, and praise God," as well as to "speak with other tongues," if it be the result of a genuine cure of a long waiting in the "upper room," or of the Spirit's agency in giving them utterance. But also teach them not to attempt a reversal of God's order, by using the effect to produce the cause, since even the devil, dumb as he is, can discern the imbecility of the physical contortions and incoherent utterances sometimes indulged in order to secure the presence of the Holy Ghost, and thus the good of the meeting. He comes not thus, nor is the meeting thus helped.

But we hasten to conclude that which has grown far beyond our original purpose. Soon

the earthly house of these tabernacles will be dissolved, and the building of God not made with hands, will appear in the heavens. Soon shall we see the "great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." May its "street of pure gold, as it were transparent glass," echo our footfalls! May the gates of pearl open wide at our approach, and the jasper walls, with their twelve foundations, re-echo our song to the Lamb! Soon beside "the river of water of life," and beneath the far-reaching branches of "the tree of life," may writer and reader, having been "faithful unto death," "wear a crown of life!" But first, "the valley of the shadow" must we pass. Let us go, "fearing no evil," for our Shepherd's "rod and staff shall comfort" us.

"There the crystalline stream, bursting forth from the throne,
Flows on, and forever will flow;
Its waves as they roll are with melody rife,
And its waters are sparkling with beauty and life,
In the land which no mortal may know.

"And there, on its margin, with leaves ever green,
With its fruits healing sickness and woe,
The fair tree of life, in its glory and pride,
Is fed by that deep, inexhaustible tide,
In the land which no mortal may know."

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